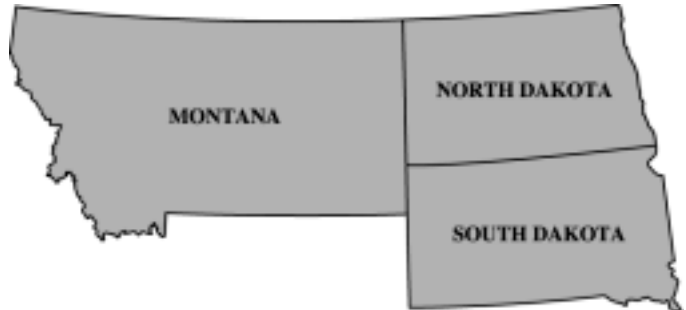




Fire Management Planning and Funding

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

- \$ The 2000 fire season and additional Congressional funding have prompted several changes in our fire program.
- \$ We are updating fire management plans to reduce the risk and cost of severe wildfires. This will help us identify opportunities to use prescribed fire and mechanical treatments to reduce hazardous fuels and meet other resource management objectives.
- \$ A fire management plan and an environmental assessment was released on August 10, 2001. The comment period ends November 16, 2001.
- \$ These updated plans will be used in the Fire Management Activity Plan (FMAP) to identify statewide fire management objectives, staffing and equipment needs, and anticipated costs. The FMAP helps us identify our most efficient level (MEL).
- \$ We are in the process of hiring staff to meet 100 percent of our MEL and we will focus on contracting with local entities.
- \$ We are working with our state and federal partners to identify and prioritize communities at risk.
- \$ We developed a process to distribute funds to local/rural fire departments.



HOW DID WE GET HERE?

- \$ A combination of dry, overgrown fuels and dry, hot weather throughout the West in the summer of 2000 led to what some are declaring one of the most severe wildland fire seasons in U.S. history.
- \$ The BLM is responsible for wildland fire protection on more than 8 million acres of public land in Montana/Dakotas.
- \$ BLM also protects more than 600,000 acres of other federal and state lands in eastern Montana.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

- \$ We are considering how to best manage wildland fires and use prescribed fires and mechanical treatments to reduce hazardous fuels while achieving resource objectives.
- \$ We must also meet the expectations of the Congressional legislation which requires us to focus efforts in three key areas:
 1. Preparedness
 - \$ We are continuing to hire employees to put 100 percent of MEL in place.
 - \$ We have a heavy airtanker in Billings; contract helicopters in Lewistown and Ft. Howes; two single-engine airtankers in Miles City; a single engine airtanker in Lewistown; and air attack/detection aircraft in Lewistown, Miles City, and Billings.
 - \$ We will start to upgrade or build new fire facilities in Bridger, Ekalaka and Jordan.
 - \$ We completed facilities in Miles City and Lewistown, and began planning for a new regional interagency fire cache in Billings.
 2. Rural Fire Assistance
 - \$ Montana has more than 400 recognized volunteer and rural fire departments.
 - \$ We distributed \$720,000 for rural fire assistance in Montana/Dakotas.
 - \$ Through Montana's Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC), we solicited proposals from all Montana counties and rural and county fire departments.
 - \$ We applied available funding to the most pressing equipment and training needs.
 3. Community Fire Protection
 - \$ We are expanding our fuels/prescribed fire program and identifying communities most at risk from wildland fire.
 - \$ With DNRC and other agencies with fire responsibility, we will plan and implement projects to protect those communities.



WHO ELSE IS CONCERNED?

- \$ Public interest in the fire program peaks during the fire season, and is more intense when property and structures are threatened.
- \$ We have also received considerable interest from those seeking employment.
- \$ Local and county governments are very interested in our fire program.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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